



**CHOICE**<sup>SM</sup>  
Health Plans

**Provider News**

## Novel Coronavirus and People with HIV

### A Joint Statement from NYC Health Department and NYS Department of Health

The following important message is from NYC Health Department and NYS Department of Health. VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans is sharing this with SelectHealth HIV Primary Care sites and other providers in the interest of our members' health.

Dear Colleague,

The New York City Health Department and the New York State Department of Health have received questions from HIV care providers about whether there are any specific concerns for people with HIV related to the growing outbreak of novel coronavirus and COVID-19 respiratory disease.

**At this moment, people with HIV should follow the same guidance as the general population, and do not need to take additional precautions. Please see New York City's guidance for [health care providers](#) and the [public](#), and New York State's guidance for [providers](#) and the [public](#).**

To date, the main [risk factors](#) for severe COVID-19 are older age and co-morbidities including cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory or cardiovascular disease. HIV infection has not specifically been identified as a risk factor, but would be included when guidance refers generally to immune-compromised individuals.

**Providers and the public should follow the latest [CDC guidance](#).**  
People who had contact with a person with COVID-19 or travelled to

an [affected area](#) and, in the following 14 days, experience fever, cough, or shortness of breath should call their medical provider. Other people who experience mild illness should stay home. Providers should consider evaluating patients with fever and lower respiratory illness that requires hospitalization for possible COVID-19. Follow updated [CDC guidance](#) on who should be evaluated for COVID-19.

**Clinics and providers can take steps to prepare for a wider outbreak.**

Clinics should be [preparing](#) to be able to both respond to a wider coronavirus public health emergency and to maintain their capacity to provide HIV care and treatment. This includes establishing a plan for telemedicine<sup>1</sup> or other mechanisms for providing patient care remotely. Providers should continue to support patients with HIV to achieve and maintain viral suppression; ensure that patients have received recommended influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations; talk to patients about maintaining their supply of medications; and encourage them to maintain social networks remotely.

**The coronavirus outbreak is rapidly evolving.** Our health departments will share any updates to specific guidance for people with HIV.

Sincerely,

Oni Blackstock, MD,  
MHS Assistant Commissioner Bureau of HIV  
New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Charles Gonzalez, MD Medical Director  
AIDS Institute  
New York State Department of Health

<sup>1</sup> See [Medicaid billing rules for telehealth services](#)

[Read the letter as a PDF](#)

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